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TAGS: PREL PGOV TU AF

SUBJECT: TURKEY: MFA OUTLINES UPCOMING AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) MFA Africa Section Chief Aykut Kumbaroglu told us the GOT will host the Turkey-Africa Union Cooperation Summit in Istanbul August 18-21. President Gul extended invitations to heads-of-state from 51 African Union members (all with the exception of Western Sahara, which Turkey does not recognize) and Morocco. Although Zimbabwe's President Mugabe and Sudanese President Bashir are expected to attend, Kumbaroglu said the GOT hopes to avoid politicizing the event by focusing exclusively on humanitarian issues and increased cooperation. (Note: Both Bashir and Mugabe participated in the EU-AU Lisbon Summit.) The GOT aims for the Summit to be the beginning of a "steady, sustainable cooperative process" with the AU and to create enhanced bilateral relations with AU member states.

¶2. (SBU) Kumbaroglu reported senior officials and foreign ministers will meet in back-to-back August 19 sessions to endorse the summit communique and joint action program. The Istanbul Declaration will establish a series of goals for broader Turkish-African relations. The action program outlines cooperative efforts in education, health, agriculture, and irrigation -- all fields in which Turkey has significant experience, Kumbaroglu added. The Summit itself will occur on August 20. AU Chairman Jean Ping finalized Summit details during meetings with President Gul, PM Erdogan, and FM Babacan in Ankara July 16-17.

¶3. (C) Comment: Turkey's renewed African engagement reflects its increasingly active "strategic depth" foreign policy. Sub-Saharan Africa also represents new markets for Turkish companies and a broader support base for Turkey's multilateral ambitions. It is no coincidence the GOT is hosting the Turkey-AU Summit two months before the UNSC non-permanent member election in October. The agenda will inevitably include a not-so-subtle pitch for support of Turkey's bid. End Comment.

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